

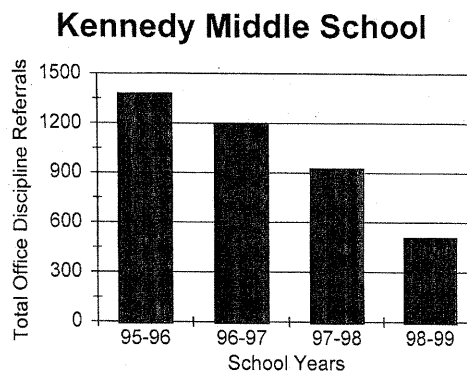
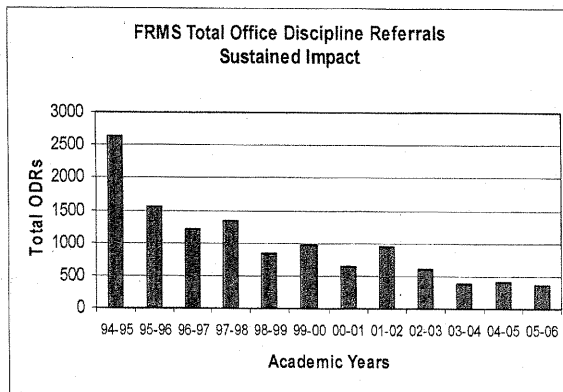
## POSITIVE BEHAVIORAL SUPPORTS - OVERVIEW FOR VERMONT INITIATIVE

PBS (Positive Behavioral Supports) or PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) as it is commonly referred to, defines a systems approach to raising levels of social competence and improving behavior for all children. PBS is the integration of research based practices and interventions, data based decision making, and positive student supports. Successful PBS implementation in a school creates operationally defined and valued outcomes using research-validated practices. The shift from reactive and aversive approaches to managing problem behaviors to a preventive and positive focus creates reduced numbers of problem behaviors and enhances learning quality for all students.

School-wide PBS is founded in research that demonstrates successful individual student behavior support to be linked to host environments or school climates that are effective, efficient, relevant, & durable.<sup>1</sup> Additional related research connects enhanced learning quality and increased effective instructional time to raised levels of academic achievement. Simply put:

1. More students out of the classroom on referral to the principal's office mean fewer students in the classroom available for learning.
2. Student time spent outside the learning environment receiving "discipline" is inversely proportionate to their level of individual achievement.
3. The more time teachers spend on discipline, the less time they have to teach.
4. The more time administrators spend issuing discipline, the less time they have to lead positive school culture initiatives.

Consider the following sample school data related to post PBS office discipline referrals at two schools over a multi-year period<sup>2</sup> –

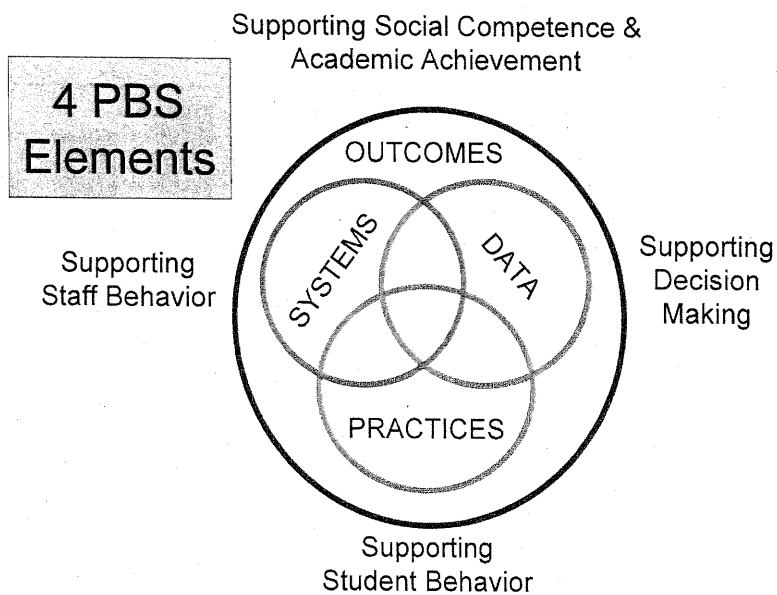
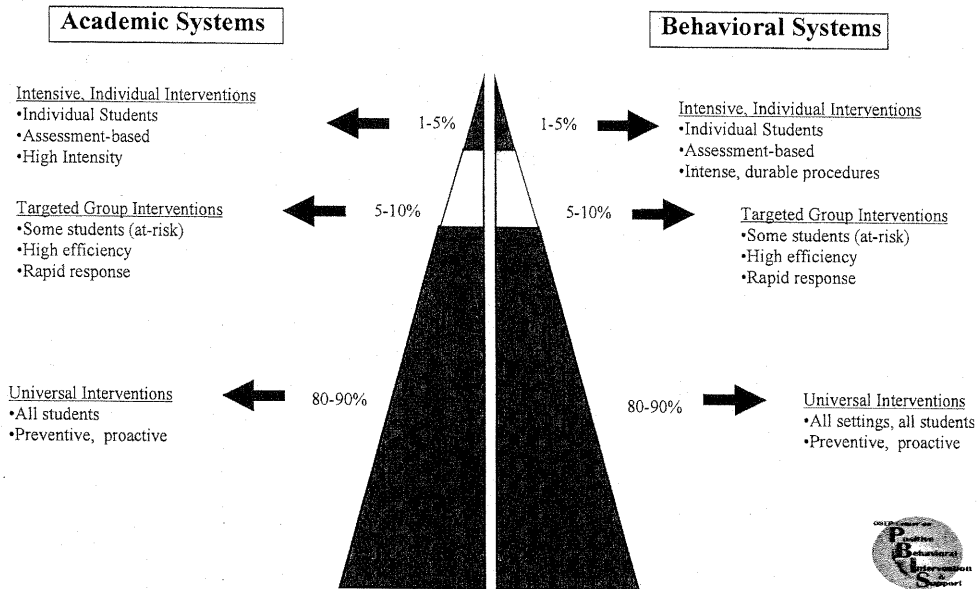


Currently, 41 states are involved in a state-wide implementation initiative of PBS in their schools. More than 6000 U.S. schools are sustaining PBS successfully and report a reduction in office discipline referrals of 25-80% over a five year period. The integrated model for school-wide systems implementation and the core elements of school-wide PBS are shown below:

<sup>1</sup> Zins and Ponti, 1990

<sup>2</sup> School-wide Positive Behavioral Support Overview, George Sugai, OSEP Center on PBIS, University of Connecticut, March 2007.

# Designing School-Wide Systems for Student Success



PBS focuses on changing adult behavior as a precursor to changing student behavior. Using a coaching trainer model with faculty improves sustainability of implementation. Responding to student discipline problems presents a major challenge for teachers, counselors, administrators, and family members. The form this response takes is a critical factor in creating lasting positive change in student behavior.<sup>3</sup> In school-wide PBS, adjustments are made at the district, school, and classroom, and community level in order to affect the best possible outcome for academic and social competence for all students. Because these changes exist for all students and faculty, they are considered “universal” applications. Additionally, supports and interventions are provided with progressive focus and intensity for small groups and then ultimately for individuals when indicated, in addition to school-wide efforts. With this approach, school-wide change efforts have the best chance of improving outcomes for all students, including those with disabilities who might have otherwise received instruction outside the classroom or school.

Predicated on the principals of applied behavioral analysis, assumptions underlying the PBS approach as articulated in the PBS Implementer’s Blueprint<sup>4</sup> are as follows:

1. Behavior is learned and can be taught
2. Behavior occurrences are affected by environmental factors that interact with biophysical characteristics of the individual
3. Understanding the relation between physiology factors and environmental variables is a critical feature when supporting students with behavioral, social, emotional, and mental health issues
4. Assessing and manipulating environmental factors can predictably affect occurrences of behavior
5. Data collection and use for active decision-making are important for continuous intervention, program and system improvement

Four primary elements must be present to ensure implementation of PBIS with fidelity:

1. Defined desired outcomes reinforced by students, families and educators
2. Evidence based practices
3. Real time data collection used for evaluation and self-correction
4. Systems that support sustained implementation of PBS practices

### Cost Savings

Even the best schools struggle with student discipline problems that start with out of classroom referrals. For repeat offenders, this often results in suspension and expulsion due to unmanageable behavior.

The PBS system is designed to capture important data for decision making and systems evaluation from the very beginning of implementation. In addition to increasing instructional time, significant cost savings have been realized in implementing schools. For example, New Hampshire statistics for two cohorts of 22 schools each studied over a two year period report

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<sup>3</sup> Preventing School Violence: The use of office discipline referrals to assess and monitor school-wide discipline interventions, Sugai, G., Sprague, J.R., Horner, R.H., & Walker, H.M. (2000). *Journal of Emotional and Behavioral Disorders*, 8, 94-101.

<sup>4</sup> School-wide Positive Behavior Support, Implementer’s Blueprint and Self-Assessment, Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, University of Oregon, 2004.

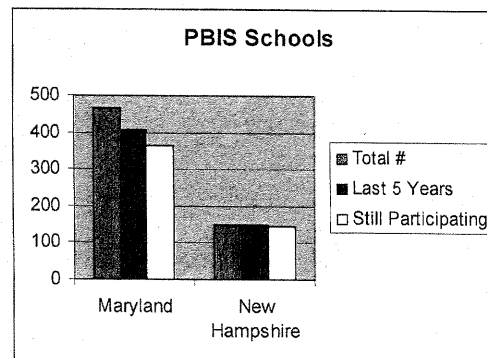
recovering a total of **2823 days for learning, 591 days for teaching, and 1263 days for leadership and administration.**<sup>5</sup>

<b>Cohort 1 – 22 Schools</b> (ECE, Elem., MS, HS, Multi-level) Reduction %	<b>Office Discipline Referrals</b> 6010 – 28%	<b>In-School Suspensions</b> 637 – 31%	<b>Out of School Suspensions</b> 395 – 19%	<b>Recovered Time</b> 1783 days for learning 282 days for teaching 612 days for leadership
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<b>Cohort 2 – 22 Schools</b> (ECE, Elem., MS, HS, Multi-level) Reduction %	<b>Office Discipline Referrals</b> 1070 – 11%	<b>In-School Suspensions</b> 23 – 3%	<b>Out of School Suspensions</b> 497 – 46%	<b>Recovered Time</b> 1040 days for learning 309 days for teaching 651 days for leadership
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### Sustainability

As mentioned earlier, 41 states<sup>6</sup> are currently engaged in state-wide implementation of a system of PBS in over 6000 schools nationwide. Examples of sustainability data for two exemplar states, New Hampshire and Maryland are outlined at right.<sup>7</sup>



### **Vermont's Statewide PBS Initiative**

#### Working with Existing Initiatives

PBS provides a framework of sustainability and lasting cultural change for existing initiatives to be successful beyond the pilot stage. And for schools who have found it difficult to even consider adding new initiatives because of the overwhelming amount of time they spend dealing with school discipline and climate issues, PBS provides a systematic way of reducing the time spent on those problems and redirecting that energy to positive academic pursuits for the benefit of their children, families, and faculty.

#### What Does it Mean to Have Statewide Support?

Statewide implementation means states have organized themselves across the state with levels of support and coaching that allow for schools in all areas of their state to participate in the process of self-assessment and implementation of PBS if they so desire. Different states fund this

<sup>5</sup> Developing State Capacity for Durable and Accurate Implementation of Statewide Positive Behavior Support in New Hampshire, Howard S. Muscott, Ed.D. New Hampshire; presentations International APBS Conference; March 2007.

<sup>6</sup> Statewide Behavior Initiatives, National Association of State Directors of Special Education, Inc., inForum, February 2007.

<sup>7</sup> Using the Implementer's Blueprint to Build Sustainable Statewide PBIS Initiatives, Susan Barrett, State Coordinator, State of Maryland; Developing State Capacity for Durable and Accurate Implementation of Statewide Positive Behavior Support in New Hampshire, Howard S. Muscott, Ed.D. New Hampshire; presentations International APBS Conference, March 2007.

initiative at different levels through varying funding streams, collaborating with stakeholders across agencies, communities, and departments to move the initiative forward. All states that have embarked on this initiative, some beginning as early as 1990 and some as recently as last year, have continued to move forward and report increasing levels of interest and participation each year with low levels of drop out and high rates of sustainability over time. Because the system is data driven and evaluation is training embedded, these same states have also been able to collect longitudinal data to show significantly positive outcomes in levels of student behavior, teacher morale and turnover, and student achievement.

In Vermont, having a Statewide leadership team means we are able to bring stakeholders together to establish direction and support for implementation in interested schools. It also means we can focus the expertise of existing teams, such as the BEST team and the I Team on providing the necessary training and on-going coaching needed for successful implementation. These teams then become a resource for creating regionally based professional support for schools. Lastly, by establishing a system of Statewide supports we are able to draw in national resources from PBS centers for further training and technical assistance as needed.

#### **Resources to Learn More about Positive Behavioral Supports**

**[www.pbis.org](http://www.pbis.org)**

**[www.pbismaryland.org](http://www.pbismaryland.org)**

**[www.apbs.org](http://www.apbs.org)**

*School has to be at a  
point that people  
want change.*